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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the nature of preservice teachers' instructional actions during Directed Reading-Teaching Activities (DR-TA) to involve students in reading and enhance their understanding of text, noting scaffolding processes used to engage children in making sense of text. Twenty-eight preservice teachers who were first-semester K-8 interns participated. They received instruction in DR-TA and learned about scaffolding in conjunction with mediating understanding through peer and small group discussions of text. Data collection included lesson plans in which interns used DR-TA and journal reflections, student artifacts (e.g., activity sheets, written responses, and drawings), and observation notes from mentors or liaisons concerning instruction. Analyses revealed interns used 15 instructional actions to involve students with text. Predictions, teacher questions, and writing to learn dominated interns' instructional actions. They used the most instructional actions during pre- and post-reading and the least during reading. Regarding scaffolding processes, modeling how to make predictions and reading portions of text to predetermined stopping points were prevalent across most lessons. Interns' instruction provided limited time for extended student response. Most dialogue was teacher-controlled. Interns gained valuable knowledge about teaching, learning, and helping students read text with understanding. The most salient knowledge was the importance of pausing during reading to encourage students to think, predict, and answer questions about the text. (Contains 19 references.) (SM)

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Preservice Teachers' Instructional Actions to Support Meaningful Interaction with Text

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Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA, April 16, 1998.

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Preservice Teachers' Instructional Actions to Support Meaningful Interaction with Text

Reading for understanding is a complex and dynamic process that requires the reader to play an active role in making sense of text. From the start, good readers are mindful of their purposes when they begin to read by sizing up a text and using this knowledge to frame and guide their reading (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). In this process, a reader brings forth knowledge and experiences, integrates these with the writers' ideas, and reconstructs a personal understanding. The reader's conceptual knowledge has been described as schemata or an organized net work of knowledge into which new information is assimilated (Adams & Collins, 1979; Anderson, 1977). As Duffy and Roehler (1984) state, " reading comprehension depends as much on the reader's previously acquired knowledge as on the information provided by the text" (p 31).

Throughout the reading, the reader generates predictions and forms tentative hypotheses that reflect a use of text clues and personal knowledge. As reading proceeds, the reader is constantly monitoring understanding by testing and evaluating these hypotheses against text information and background knowledge (Brown, 1978; Baker & Brown, 1984). According to Pressley and Afflerbach (1995), the reader deals with confusion in several ways: by pausing to reflect on the meaning; by reading the text aloud; or by shifting the focus to another portion of the text that may help to clarify the

confusion. In order to construct a representation of a whole text, readers form interpretations that include a variety of responses consisting of images, feelings, mood, inferences, and alternative perspectives (Beach & Hynds, 1991; Collins, Brown, & Larkin, 1980; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995; & Rosenblatt, 1978).

This brief summary of reading for understanding is not meant to describe all of the processes involved for to do that "would be to describe very many of the most intricate workings of the human mind..." (Huey; 1908). However, it is meant to underscore the point that reading involves thoughtful consideration of a text by the reader. It follows then that in teaching students to read with understanding, teachers need to involve them in thoughtful and active meaning-making.

This paper presents the findings of a study that explored preservice teachers' instructional actions to engage students in active and meaningful reading of texts. The study is based on two premises: First teachers need to provide deliberate instruction aimed at engaging students in the process of thinking about texts (Pearson & Fielding, 1991). Second teachers, especially novice teachers, need a framework to guide instruction that involves students in reading for meaning. An approach that was outlined in preservice teachers' content reading text as a framework for guiding active and meaningful reading was the Directed Reading - Thinking Activity (Stauffer, 1969). DR-TA was selected as the framework for this study for several reasons: First, it provided sufficient structure for preservice teachers to follow in their initial experiences helping children read text with understanding. Second, it encouraged preservice teachers to pause during the course of reading to allow children to think about the text instead of reading through the whole text and then answering questions. Third, DR-TA could be used with

a wide variety of texts and content, (i.e. Social Studies, Science) from newspapers to trade books and therefore could be adapted to curriculum materials currently in use.

According to Stauffer (1969), the primary purpose of DR-TA is to encourage critical reading. This requires readers to become skillful in setting their own purposes for reading and then reading to test those purposes. Readers are compelled to continue reading to satisfy themselves. To create a climate for critical thinking, Stauffer suggests that teachers ask three questions: "What do you think? Why do you think so? and Can you prove it?" (p. 40). When used with a group of students, DR-TA permits students to "compare and contrast their thinking with that of others in the dynamics of interacting minds" (Stauffer, 1969, p. 40).

During reading the teacher engages students in the meaning-making process by modeling and encouraging predictions, questions, and thoughtful interpretations. This interaction provides scaffolds that raise students to higher levels of understanding which gradually enables them to make sense on their own (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Vygotsky, 1978) By reading and talking with the teacher and classmates, students learn from one another how to form, revise, and justify interpretations. Dialogue among students and teacher about a common text can serve as a medium through which students collectively explore questions, generate answers, and solve problems. The group interaction provides students with models for forming and negotiating interpretations, developing explanations, and justifying arguments. Discussions of text have been found to promote higher levels of thinking and offer opportunities for exploration of multiple perspectives (Gambrell & Almasi, 1996). This shared meaning-making experience engages students in the process of making sense of text and supports their efforts to read

with understanding. Students who are more able readers can nudge struggling readers by showing them ways of constructing meaning that work. In such social learning situations, the teacher also plays a powerful influence by being available to assist students as help is needed and by offering spontaneous instructional feedback that enables students to complete tasks successfully.

Dewey (1933) asserted that reflection is an integral part of thinking. Reflection about experiences allows for deliberate and thoughtful consideration of information with creative and imaginative processes, organization and synthesis of new and old out of which concepts or cognitive structures emerge. By guiding reflection during the reading event, teachers can help students participate in such creative and constructive processes to understand what they are reading.

Rosenblatt (1978) has argued that the reading is a transaction between the reader and text in which the reader moves beyond the literal information to experience the text aesthetically. In transacting with a text, the reader brings personal experiences, emotions, knowledge, and purposes to the reading. By responding to the text along both cognitive and affective dimensions and reflecting on one's own responses as well as other's, readers become aware of multiple perspectives which broadens their own individual understanding..

Pressley and Afflerbach (1995) found support for transactional reading in readers' think aloud responses to text. Most readers were found to form different interpretations and evaluations of the same text and many also had the experience of being transported to different times and places through reading. Pressley and Afflerbach concluded that readers, particularly expert readers, were indeed constructively responsive.

This qualitative study explored the instructional actions of preservice teachers to engage students in meaningful interactions with text. The research questions guiding this study were:

What is the nature of preservice teachers' instructional actions during DR-TA to involve students in reading and enhance their understanding of text?

What scaffolding processes do preservice teachers use to engage children in making sense of the text?

What do preservice teachers learn about mediating understanding of text from the experience of implementing DR-TA and reflecting about their own teaching?

Methods

Qualitative methods were used to explore the instructional actions of 28 preservice teachers during field-based teaching lessons in which DR-TA was used as an instructional approach. Multiple data sources from multiple classroom settings were collected to explore and describe preservice teachers' actions and infer what they had learned from the experience.

Procedures

Twenty-eight female preservice teachers who were interns in the first semester of a yearlong field-based teacher education program participated in this study. The interns were teaching in four rural and semi-rural school districts in grades K - 8. During the first semester in the field, interns worked with mentor teachers two days each week in two different classrooms. Interns also attended weekly day-long seminars consisting of integrated content reading/math/science/and social studies courses taught by a team of faculty at the university. While working as a member of this team, I was primarily

responsible for the content reading instruction. A topic of emphasis in this course was strategies and approaches that support reader text transactions and enhance comprehension of text. One of the approaches we explored was the Directed Reading - Thinking Activity (DR-TA) (Stauffer, 1969). DR-TA was described in interns' content reading textbook (Vacca & Vacca, 1996) as an approach for increasing student interaction with text during reading through predicting, questioning, and thoughtful discussion. I demonstrated DR-TA in seminar and we analyzed transcripts of sample lessons to note the teacher-student interaction and mediation processes involved. We also discussed the concept of scaffolding in conjunction with mediating understanding through peer and small group discussions of text. Then interns were asked to teach a reading lesson using DR-TA in their field-based classroom. They selected an appropriate text to suit their students' needs and interests, instructional objectives, and curriculum. To limit disruption of daily classroom routines, interns were encouraged to implement DR-TA in a flexible manner within a time frame that meshed with the regular curriculum activities and was suitable with mentor teachers. Most lessons were taught between October and November of 1996.

Data Sources and Analyses

Multiple data sources from multiple classroom situations in grades K-8 were used for this study. Primary data sources consisted of interns' lesson plans in which DR-TA was used and journal reflections. In addition, student artifacts (activity sheets, written responses, drawings) and observation notes from mentors or liaisons provided supporting evidence about instruction. All of the preservice teachers agreed to submit lesson plans and journal reflections for the study. Observations of students were conducted by

university liaisons that were responsible for supervising prospective teachers in the field. The author was the liaison to six of the participating interns, but taught seminar with a team of faculty who also were liaisons to the other interns.

Constant comparative methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were used to analyze the data. Data analyses began as data were collected and continued throughout the study. This was a recursive process which involved reading the data, recording insights and noting descriptive categories while exploring the data and continually searching for unique emerging patterns or incidents (Bodgan & Bilken, 1992).

Data sources were managed by first reading through all the lessons (including artifacts and observations) to gain an overview of students' implementation of DR-TA in terms of elements characteristic of the approach. These included making predictions, asking questions, pausing during reading to allow students to express and discuss their ideas, and verifying or confirming their predictions. Additional elements that emerged from this first reading were noted. These included scaffolding and constructive processes, quality of student engagement with text, kind of text, student responses through writing and drawing, and other specific strategies. With the research question in mind, I developed an analysis guide to gather information about these elements from the lessons. (see Appendix A) The lessons were read once again while recording information on the analysis guide.

To compile information from the analysis guides and notations on the lessons, I designed a chart which consisted of the following broad categories: Text, Reading, Instructional Actions (prereading, during reading, post reading), Instructional Focus and Organization. I read the lessons along with analysis guides once again to transfer

information under each category to this chart. In the process, subcategories were identified and frequencies for each were recorded on the chart. For example, specific instructional actions and number of instances were noted for pre, during, and post reading phases. To describe specific instructional instances in a more contextualized fashion, I highlighted examples in the lesson plans and listed these excerpts on another chart. (see Appendix B) These also were identified as occurring pre, during, or post reading.

Once analyses of the lesson plans were complete, I began to analyze the journal reflections, examining instruction from the perspectives of the preservice teachers to gain an understanding about what they focused on, thought about, and learned from this experience. As I read interns' journal reflections, I noted specific qualities, elements, and instances in the margins. These items were later compiled as a running list. Similar items on the list were clustered and the emerging categories were eventually labeled with the following headings: interest/motivation, construction of meaning, inquiry, guided reading, developing independence, and modifications. (see Appendix C)

Half of the data (lesson plans, observations, and artifacts) were analyzed independently by two graduate assistants using the analysis guide. Their analyses were found to be in 93% agreement when compared with the author's. Half of the journal reflections were analyzed by a third graduate assistant using a coding scheme developed by the author. These were found to be in at least 90% agreement with the author's coding of the same lessons.

Findings

Instructional Actions

With respect to the first research question What is the nature of preservice teachers' instructional actions to enhance comprehension of text when implementing an Directed Reading Thinking Activity? analyses revealed fifteen instructional actions that preservice teachers used to involve students with text; predictions, teacher questions, and writing to learn dominated interns' instructional actions. (see Table 1) Interns primarily encouraged students to make predictions through out the entire lesson -- before, during and after reading. Teacher questions were predominant before and during reading, while Writing to learn was used primarily as a postreading activity.

Overall, the highest number of instructional actions were found in the pre and post reading phases, while the least number were found during reading. In the prereading phase of the lessons, building prior knowledge, developing vocabulary, using visuals, setting a purpose, writing, and explaining a strategy were found in high numbers. Student talk or discussion was most evident during reading, although only seven instances were noted. Writing and drawing were most prevalent in the post reading phase of the lessons.

In terms of the second research question What scaffolding processes do preservice teachers use to make sense of text? modeling how to make predictions and reading portions of the text to predetermined stopping points were prevalent across most lessons. Interns also usually used visuals such as posters or pictures and graphic organizers such as KWL, story maps, and charts. For the most part, questions were generated by the teacher prior to the lesson and focused on ideas in the text. Nevertheless, some teacher questions were open-ended and allowed for student interpretation. Student questions

were not as apparent and few preservice teachers made comments about students generating their own questions. Journal writing in connection with reading was found in only a few instances, and shared writing among students or with the teacher was virtually absent. Much of the writing was found to consist of short-answer questions on activity sheets that were completed after the reading.

Instruction generally could be characterized primarily as teacher-led, whole group. (see Table 2) Only three lessons were considered collaborative, defined as students and teachers generating and negotiating meaning together. Small cooperative groups and whole group instruction combined with partner reading were found only once.

Data analyses also provided additional information about the kind of text students read and how it was read. (see Table 3) In slightly more than a third of the lessons (10), students read stories in their basal readers. Trade books were read in six lessons, and a weekly newsletter was read in two lessons. Science text was read more often than any other content area text. Math text was not read in any of the lessons.

Table 3 also shows how the text was read. Silent reading of text was prevalent (15 instances). In one lesson, a teacher used audio tapes to enable special needs students to listen to the text. Teacher read alouds were found in only five lessons; and student read alouds combined with silent reading totaled five. Paired reading (student reading aloud to student) and skimming and scanning text silently (students did not read the complete text) were found in only one lesson each.

Reflections

Interns' reflections about their experiences with DR-TA were used to address the question: What did preservice teachers learn about mediating understanding of text from

the experience of implementing DR-TA and reflecting about their teaching? Recursive analyses of interns' reflections about their lessons revealed the following major areas of focus as constructing meaning, interest and motivation, and modifications, followed by guiding reading, then finally inquiry and developing independence. (see Figure 1) Descriptions were taken from interns' lesson plans as they were clustered in order to form the categories. (see Appendix C).

Constructing meaning. Constructing meaning emerged as the largest category of insights. Interns identified constructive processes such as discussions, predictions, revision and verification of predictions, brainstorming, using prior knowledge, connecting new with old, and reading to confirm that were used to help students make sense of the text. Comments such as providing *think time*, *making students think*, and *using students' thoughts* implied that interns were approaching reading as a thoughtful, meaningful process. One intern stated, "she tried not to think for students so they would think for themselves."

Interest/ motivation. In the category of interest/ motivation, many interns noticed that students were eager to participate because they wanted to read to find out if their predictions were correct. Most interns also stated that students were excited about reading, enjoyed using their imagination and generally liked reading and talking about the texts. As one intern stated, "students were not bored because they could read for their own purposes." Some interns noted that the format of reading and stopping to think gave all students a chance so that even low-level students participated. Many noticed an elevated level of confidence in students that they attributed to "the risk-free and open environment."

Modifications. Many interns reflected about the modifications they would make if they were to teach a similar lesson again. Many said they would reduce the amount of text that students had to read because time was limited and because students got tired. One intern said that she would decrease the number of stopping points and increase the length of reading sections to reduce interruptions to the reading. Several said they would allot more time for students to read, especially for less able readers. For the most part, however, comments about modifications varied from student to student and were situation specific. Some of these included using other strategies (e.g. KWL, skimming and scanning) in conjunction with DR-TA, using concrete examples to illustrate concepts, using small groups to allow students to help one another, and trying DR-TA with students in different grade levels and with different texts.

Guiding reading. Guiding reading consisted of a large number of responses which focused on teacher instructional actions such as prompts, cues and strategies that interns used to move students through the DR-TA framework and guide their reading. Some of these included identifying predetermined stopping points, skimming and scanning the text, stopping to clarify, explaining points or asking questions, and praising and accepting student responses. As one intern insightfully noted in reference to skimming and scanning, "not all students automatically do this." Another intern realized she had heightened students' awareness of the structure, had show them how to use it by "retracing their steps and rereading", and had provided clarification before continuing with the reading. Still another intern recognized the ripple effect of student-centered response, stating "having students explain their answers led other students to comment."

Inquiry. A small number of interns' reflections focused on facilitating inquiry. They noted that active questioning, especially "why" and "how" questions, prompted students to participate. One intern stated that she answered students' questions with a question to encourage them to think. Another intern compared the inquiry process to engaging students in "solving a mystery" while another said it was like "going on a scavenger hunt." Several interns felt that an inquiry orientation toward text contribute to a noticeable increase in motivation and interest on the part of students.

A small number of reflections also focused on developing independence. Many interns explicitly stated that they wanted students to be "independent" and "not rely on the teacher," but to "use their own minds." One intern noticed that students "opened up" because they were not criticized for being wrong. Several interns showed students how to use their texts and the structural elements (i.e. headings, subheadings, bold print) independently to enhance their comprehension. Most interns noted that students benefited from evaluating their predictions and answering their own questions.

Overall, interns appeared to have gained some valuable knowledge about teaching, learning, and helping students read text with understanding. This knowledge was not limited to the procedures and implementation of the DR-TA approach alone. Rather it also included strategies and activities that were aimed at helping students make sense of the text they were reading. Moreover, the majority of interns highlighted the importance of exploring multiple perspectives and finding solutions over finding correct answers. Probably the most valuable and certainly the most salient knowledge that was evident across all lessons was the importance of pausing during the reading to encourage students to think, make predictions, and answer questions about the text. Pausing to think

about the text increased opportunities for students to interact with the text, with the teacher, and with each other which in turn served to mediate understanding in the process of reading.

While interns considered the constructive processes involved in reading for meaning, some essential elements were missing from their instruction. First of all, their instruction provided limited time and opportunities for extended student response such as that found in discussions. Although some interns reported that they had encouraged discussion, this more closely resembled teacher-initiated and teacher-led recitation. Furthermore, in all but a few instances, interaction and dialogue originated from the teacher, was controlled by the teacher, and was primarily unidirectional. That is the interaction flowed from teacher to students rather than from students to students or students to teacher.

Second, there was little evidence that these preservice teachers were approaching reading as a socially embedded process. Other than the occasional acceptance of more than one response to a teacher's question and the few instances of small group reading, reading was very much a school activity rather than a personal or social activity. In other words, the children were reading for the teacher's purposes, to answer the teacher's questions, and to complete the teacher's assignment. There were few instances in which the children were given choices about reading or opportunities to set their own purposes. There were also no instances of the teacher discussing with the children social uses of reading as might be found in the home or workplace. Reading for personal reasons to self-inform or for pleasure, or to share perspectives or understandings with classmates let alone those outside of the classroom (community, home) were virtually nonexistent.

There was little evidence that the preservice teachers were connecting reading with writing. Shared writing was not evident in the data at all. Writing of whole text (at least a paragraph) was evident in only a few instances. For the most part, when students were asked to write about their understanding of text (this was found in only a small number of lessons), it was to complete worksheets that required short answers at the word or sentence level.

In some ways DR-TA provides a framework for directing reading and thinking about text that may offer a sense of security or comfort to teachers who are just learning to teach. However, because DR-TA tends to be more teacher-directed than student-centered, it may actually prevent teachers from broadening their perspective of instruction to encompass socially constructivist activities. While some direct instruction may prove useful, it tends to discourage the amount of interaction between the students because interaction and discourse flows around and through the teacher rather than the students. A decentering of instruction is necessary for students to eventually take charge of their meaning -making and develop independence with reading to learn. This may require more interactive forms of scaffolds for reading instruction – ones that offer enough support for the teacher as the facilitator of interaction, yet situate meaning-making processes and texts in the hands of students.

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Appendix A

Analysis Guide

1. Was the lesson conducted with text? ___ Yes ___ No

___ Trade Book __Text Book ___Basal ___ Newspaper Other_____

2. How was reading of text conducted?

___ Teacher aloud ___Student aloud ___Student silent ___Partners ___Choral Other_____

3. Scaffolding processes

___ Modeling how to _____

___Demonstrating how to _____

___Visuals such as _____

___Graphic Organizers_____

___Explanations about _____

___Questions ___Teacher ___Student ___Open ___ Interpretive ___Single Answer

___Predictions

___Exploring possible solutions

___Discussion ___whole group ___small group

___Written responses

___Shared writing ___whole group ___pairs ___small group

___Procedures or participation instructions

___Other _____ _____

This lesson was primarily: ___Teacher directed ___ Teacher guided ___ Cooperative

___ Collaborative ___Whole group ___Small Group Other_____

Appendix B

Examples of Instructional Actions Taken from Lessons and Coded Pre (P), During (D), or Post Reading (A)

Recording predictions on graph (P)
Using a poster about the story structure (P)
Used a picture poster about the fair (P)
Predictions based on picture walk (P)
Making a prediction web shaped like an igloo (P)
Taking notes from the overhead about figurative language (P)
Using a modified T-chart and KWL (P) (D)
Looking at pictures in resource texts to increase prior knowledge (P)
Surveying text headings (P)
Looking up definitions in the dictionary (P)
Pronouncing vocabulary words (P)
Recording predictions on a chart and returning to verify the predictions (P) (D)

Identifying figurative language during stopping points (D)
Using a study guide, dividing text into sections, providing teacher-made questions (D)
Reflection during reading (D)
Reading selection with a partner (D)
Wondering about the topic and exploring the True or Not so True concepts (D)

Drawing a picture after reading and dictating a caption (A)
Recalling the sequence of the story using spider web graph, paper plates with pictures and word prompts (A)
Brainstorming after reading to make student's home safe from fire hazards (A)
Comparing and contrasting characters (A)
Writing a story about a character in the story using a story cube (A)
Making character pumpkins (A)
Brainstorming a topic sentence and writing supporting sentences (A)
Writing an essay about the text (A)

Appendix C
Descriptive Coding of Interns' Reflections

Constructing Meaning (CM)

Holding discussions; reading and discussing aloud
Making, revising, and justifying predictions
Giving students "think time"
Using print and pictures to make sense of text
Connecting new with their prior knowledge
Verbally interacting with the story
Learning from each other

Modifications (M)

Reduce the amount of text students would read
Give students more time to read (silently)
Use DR-TA with another type of text
Present concrete examples
Allow students to work in small groups to help each other
Use writing because it encourages more participation

Inquiry (I)

Asking open-ended questions
Solving a mystery
Active questioning
Prompting

Interest & Motivation (IM)

Making reading an adventure
Students were eager to read to verify predictions
Students were involved in the reading
Students like to voice their opinions
Students had an increased sense of confidence
Prediction motivates students to read
Setting their own purpose for reading

Guiding Reading (GR)

Read to predetermined stopping points
Skim and scan text
Model how to predict, read, stop, and question
Stop and clarify misconceptions
Have students explain their answers
Set a purpose for reading

Developing Independence (DI)

Allowing students to use their own minds
Asking students to evaluate their predictions
Teaching students how to use the text (structure) independently

Table 1

Frequency of Instructional Actions

Instructional Actions	Prereading	During Reading	Postreading
Brainstorming	3		2
Building Prior Knowledge	12		
Demonstrations	2		1
Drawing			6
Figurative Language	1	1	
Teacher Explains Strategies	9		
Predicting	21	17	12
Reflection		1	
Retelling			1
Student Talk about Text	1	7	3
Surveying Text	3		
Teacher Questioning	9	9	3
Visuals/Pictures/Illustrations	5	2	2
Vocabulary	6		2
Writing to Learn	6	2	12

Note. Numbers represent the instances found across all lessons.

Table 2

Nature of Instruction

Interaction				
	Teacher Directed	Teacher Guided	Cooperative	Collaborative
	8	16	1	3
Organization				
	Whole Group	Small Group	Whole Group & Paired	Paired
	26	1	1	-

Note. Numbers represent lessons.

Table 3

Nature of Reading During DR-TA Lessons

Type of Text

Basal	Trade Books	Weekly News	English	Math	Science	Social Studies	Computer Science
10	6	2	1	-	6	2	1

Type of Reading

Students						Teacher	
Silent	Aloud	Aloud/Silent	Partner	Audio Tapes	Skim & Scan	Aloud	Choral
15	2	3	1	1	1	5	-

Note. Numbers represent lessons.

Figure 1. Focus of Interns' Reflections About Instruction with DR-TA